

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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Issue: September 23, 2020

The NW PA Fishing Report is brought to you by:



Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango



Fishing with Darl Black
Information Service



Linda Shuck enjoyed smallmouth success on the Allegheny fishing with Keystone Connection Guide Service

LANDING NET by Darl Black

It's that weird time of year when fishing success for many anglers seems to be at low point—that several week period before water temperatures reach the magic fall feeding frenzy for many species. Baitfish and fish are on the move. Patterns seem to change daily. However, I am looking forward to great smallmouth, walleye and crappie fishing on several area lakes as we move through October and into November. The Allegheny will provide the best smallmouth and walleye fishing of the entire year come November. Of course, the steelheads will load the Erie tributaries, and perch in PIB. Big muskies will be on the prowl. I catch more largemouth bass over 6 pounds in Oct/Nov than any time. Great fishing on the horizon!

The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties. Fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers. The NWPAFR is based on experiences, observations and opinions of individual contributors; information is considered reliable but comments are not independently verified. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited for clarity and brevity, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

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News items

- Crappie Madness Derby event set for Pymatuning Lake in 2021. Sponsored by Duck-N-Drake and Northeast Ohio Crappie Club, the derby is open to any registered angler (any state) and will run from May 1st to July 31, 2021. Registration starts January 1, 2021. Go to northeastohiocrappieclub.com for complete details, derby rules and registration form. Sign-up will be possible at Duck-N-Drake starting March 1.
- The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission will begin the fall/winter stocking of trout on October 1 and run through mid-December. An expected 120,000 trout will be stocked in 100 lakes and streams. For more details visit the Fish Commission's website.

COUNTY BY COUNTY REPORTS

FRENCH CREEK – flowing through all four counties

Pete @ smalliesontheyough; filed 9/19: We fished French Creek today. It was cool and sunny. Water temperature is dropping quickly. The bite was pretty good. Smallmouth are starting to bunch together. We fished slow and landed a bunch up to 19 inches. (See photos on the right)

Bob GrinarmI @ Ducks Unlimited; filed 9/14: Our Ducks Unlimited group participated in the French Creek Clean Up, but we missed the weigh-in. Our planned 3-hour canoe trip turned into





an 8-hour event due to the enormous amount of trash we collected; it was the most trash we ever collected. Our route was from Meadville to Wilson Chutes. With the water so low, we were able to find and collect items others had missed in past years. Our crew are bulldogs! They are not afraid to tackle heavy items – especially big tires. We had one young girl that insists on rowing a flat bottom boat. We loaded her up with so much junk that the boat almost sank! (See photo on left)

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Bean @ Richter's Bait; filed 9/21: Walleye bite has started to pick up in recent days as the water temperature begins to drop; anglers are picking them up on the humps. There have been impressive perch in the 11 to 13-inch size taken recently, too. Also, we had reports of muskies moving shallow as the water cools. Crappie reports are light, but some anglers are catching them over deep brush.

Laurie @ Duck-N-Drake; filed 9/21: I have great news for this Report. Even though the cold front over the weekend slowed the bite a bit, good perch are being caught off the Causeway early and late, on both minnows and crawlers. Anglers are catching some walleyes on Shad Raps and similar plugs – but nothing on live bait. The Catfish Tournament was a success with big fish being a 26.7-pound flathead. The recent Ohio Musky Club tournament produced 18 legal muskies caught. A week ago, Mark guided a couple to a 20-pound channel cat and a 52-pound flathead! I believe that 52-pounder is only four pounds shy of the Pennsylvania State Record. But the biggest news is about the Crappie Madness Brawl we are hosting on Pymatuning Lake next spring from May 1st to July 31st. Stop by for information and regulations. (All photos from Duck -N-Drake...see 52lb flathead on Livewell page)

Russ @ Gateway Bait; filed 9/21: I hear from customers the bite is picking up for walleyes and perch. But no word on crappies.



20-pound channel cat

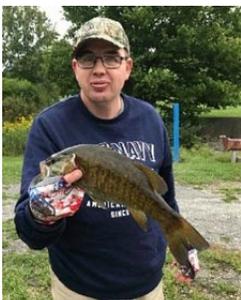
Canadohta Lake

Jerry @ Timberland Bait; filed 9/21: The dropping water temperature has the northern pike and muskie putting on the feedbag at Canadohta. Wish I knew how to share photos of the big muskies that several customers have sent to my phone – guess you'll have to stop by the shop to see them. There is a big demand for pike and musky baits right. Shop is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday – stop by to see what I have; check our Facebook page for hours. Kids tournament a week ago was a success.

Bill Logan (Pleasantville); filed 9/3: I took a 40-inch musky on a Suick Thriller. The musky's front jaw was broken; I'm guessing a fish tool was to blame. I lost another good fish on the same plug. To land and release muskies as safely as possible, I bought a big rubber net with small mesh. It's a big difference from my 33-year-old nylon net. The big fish I've landed with the new net cannot roll up in it like the old nylon one. Furthermore, the rubber doesn't remove the slime or split the fins. The net serves as a livewell by keeping it over the side. I have my tools handy, including Lindy tooth proof gloves. I use long pliers and have a small bolt cutter handy if I cannot get a hook out. Releasing a musky should be done quickly to minimize stress. I hold the fish by the tail until it kicks free.

Woodcock Lake

Dale Clemmer of Cochranton has been spending time at Woodcock Lake – more specifically in the spillway area below the dam. How many different species do you think live in the outflow? Count the ones in the photos below which Dale caught this past week..



ERIE COUNTY

Kirk @ East End Angler; filed 9/21: Without a doubt, walleyes are leaving the East Side. In the last couple days, I fished the 105 to 122 feet out of Northeast Marina, and 75 to 85 feet off the Point. I marked very few fish – unlike several weeks back when these areas were loaded. Customers in the shop are echoing similar results. Still some walleyes out, and some are being caught, but the numbers are disappearing from the East Side.

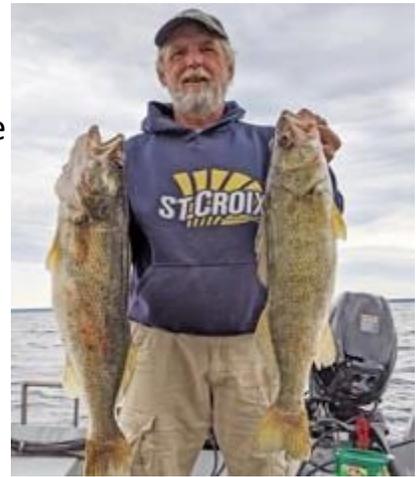
ERIE COUNTY—CONTINUED

(Kirk at East Side Angler—continues)

Fortunately, perch are showing up in the Bay – in the deeper water. Anglers are catching perch early and late from the North and South Piers, and from the deeper water along City side. Northern pike and largemouth bass are feeding up in Misery Bay and Thompson Bay. Along the shoreline at the mouths of East Side creeks, they are catching steelhead rather consistently from 6:30 am to 8:30 am.

Richard @ Someday Isle Tackle; filed 9/14 (over a week ago): It's been a whirlwind up here. Walleyes are getting into the fall mode, stacking in deep water – getting fat on baitfish. Great time to be out but not so much for smaller boats. Lake conditions are unpredictable and can change fast. (See photos on right—all photos from SIT))

Editor's note: Summary of West Side shops' reports as of September 17 indicate most walleye schools are out deep – into 70-foot plus water. Catching them seems to be hit and miss. The fish are moving, and anglers need to do the same. Some good catches are still possible under ideal conditions, but the walleye bite gets tougher day by day. Success rate low also indicated by lack of photos submitted by anglers. Angler interest is turning to steelhead, which are stacking up in the lake shallows near creek mouths. Lack of rainfall have all Erie tributaries very low and very clear; solid movement of steelies into streams is unlikely until flow increases.



Someday Isle Tackle photo



Someday Isle Tackle photo



Someday Isle Tackle photo

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

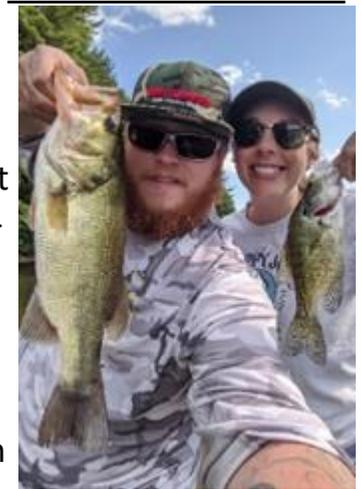
Brad Bee; filed 9/21: The largemouth bass catch at Wilhelm has been tough this past week, as well as crappie fishing. Not sure why. I'm still catching both bass and crappies, but fewer than before. Looking for fishing to pick up. (See photos—one more in Livewell page)



Wilhelm—Brad Bee

Shenango Lake

Randy @ Fish West PA; filed 9/16 & 9/21: The fall bite is full on at Shenango Lake. The afternoon is the best time right now for wall-eye, hybrid stripers and largemouth/smallmouth bass. Getting some nice hybrids this week. Fishing should remain good until mid-October. (See photos—one more on Livewell Page)



Wilhelm—Brad Bee

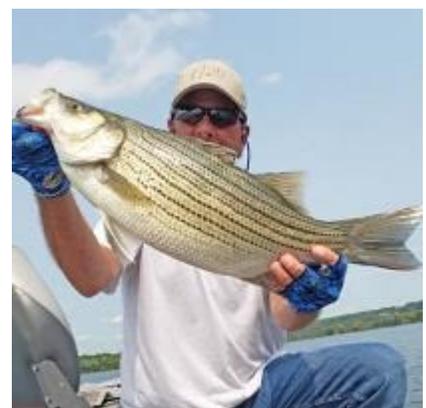
Ken Smith (Sharon); filed 9/21: Fall – perhaps my favorite time on Shenango. Crappies have been active on offshore cover at about 16 feet. I've consistently caught enough good-size ones to keep for dinner. Also catching white bass mixed in with crappies. (See photos)



Shenango—Lenny Hubbard
with crappie



Shenango—Ken Smith with white bass



Shenango—Randy with hybrid

VENANGO COUNTY

Pam @ Maurer's Trading Post; filed 9/21: With the water temperature cooling down, more species of fish are actively feeding. We are getting reports of largemouth bass and panfish being caught from area ponds, smallmouth bass and muskies from the Allegheny River, trout from Justus Lake, and crappies from Wilhelm. From what I hear from customers, smaller lures are drawing more strikes from big fish than big lures – such as a big river musky caught on a smallmouth bass lure, and a huge French Creek northern pike coming on a small lure, too. Speaking of lures, new shipments of lures and tackle are still slow – but we still have a decent inventory of baits. Right now, we are focusing on getting ice fishing gear in for what we hope will be a great winter fishing season.

Justus Lake

Sue @ Sue's Bait Shop; filed 9/21: It's been a slow period at the shop, with customers not wanting to stick around and talk fishing – instead they get their bait and leave. We haven't heard anything from the river, but we know they are still catching trout in Justus Lake. As water cools in October, trout should move shallow. Add to that the fall/winter stocking of trout into Justus, and anglers should see a lot of action. We have not heard of any muskies being caught at Justus this summer.

Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill; filed 9/20: Since last report, I've made two trips to Justus Lake. I slow-trolled live minnows and nightcrawlers. Caught some decent smallmouth and largemouth bass as well as a few rainbow trout. Almost all fish came from 20-foot-plus water depth.

Sugar Creek

Angler Al; filed 9/20: My buddy Tom Hays joined me for an evening of wade fishing on Sugar Creek. The night prior to Tom joining me, I had a blast catching smallies where slow, deep water existed. Having released all bass to same holes, I was surprised when only a few cooperative bass when Tom and I fished the next day. However, he did catch two hold-over rainbow trout and one perch while drifting a piece of crawler!

Allegheny River

Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 9/20: My clients and I have experienced good smallmouth bass fishing on the Allegheny during the past couple weeks. The water remains low and exceptionally clear. We are catching most of our fish in shallow current areas, even though the water temperature had dropped to around 60 degrees due to the string of cold nights with air temps dripping to near freezing. While some fish are coming on finesse soft plastics, most bass were taken on soft jerkbaits and Rapala X-Raps. Levels of floating weeds have been moderate. (See photos below)

Pete @ smalliesontheyough.com; filed 9/17: It was a cool day on the Allegheny. We got into action early catching smallies scattered in faster water. The day was pretty consistent, catching them in summer spots. That should change very soon with the cool down in water temperature coming. Weeds were not as bad a problem as they could have been. (See photos below)

Mike @ Mike's Custom Tackle; filed 9/19: The river tournament was held on September 19th. The winners were Dan Grove and Gabe Kappelar with a tournament limit of five bass going 20.92 pounds. That was an impressive bag for the river. Second place was 13.5 pounds. All I've been catching are small to medium size bass. Walleyes don't seem to be doing anything yet, and the grass is making it difficult to fish any lure. (See photo)



Jeff Knapp photo



Jeff Knapp photo



Pete Cartwright photo



Pete Cartwright photo



Mike's Custom Tackle photo—20.9 lbs.

Huge Largemouth Caught and Released in NW PA

Michael Finazzo (aka Lunker Mike) of Crawford County has been an occasional contributor to the NW PA Fishing Report in recent years. However, we have not heard from him since early spring. But an email arrived in two weeks ago with a photo of one huge largemouth bass. Here is Mike's photo and his story:

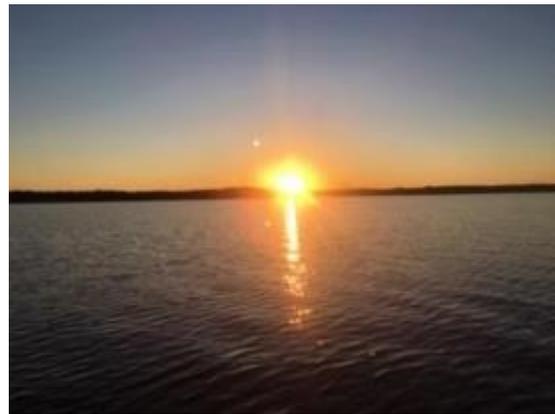


On June 3, 2020, Michael caught a 26 1/8-inch long largemouth bass from a pond in NW PA. He didn't get a girth measurement on her because I was worried about keeping her out of water any longer than a length measurement and a quick photo. Later, when checking length to weight tables for a northern largemouth from multiple sources, he believes that largemouth was over 11 pounds. As far as he knows, that huge bass is still swimming in that pond. He has been on disability since shortly after catching the monster, and has not been able to fish all summer. "Maybe one of my grandsons will catch here again someday!"

FALL IS ON THE WAY—COOLER TEMPERATURES AND BIGGER FISH! Get ready!



Fog on the river—Denny Beggs photo



Pymatuning sunset—Scott Selle photo

Area Guide Services contribute to the NW PA Fishing Report

Looking for a trip on a Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango county water?
Check them out!

Dutch Fork Guide Service: Lake Erie Walleye trolling, casting and jigging. Keith Eshbaugh; 724-884-3977; www.dutchforkcustomlures.com

Keystone Connection Guide Service: Allegheny River Smallmouth, Walleye and Musky plus Pymatuning Walleye. Jeff Knapp; 724-902-6082; keystone-connectionguideservice@gmail.com; www.facebook.com/keystoneconnectionguideservice.

Mark Rose Fishing Pro Guide; Lake Erie Smallmouth Bass. Contact 724-333-3898; markrose@bassonline.com; markrosefishing.com.

Smallies on the Yough LLC: wading for Smallmouth Bass on the Yough River, Allegheny River and other streams. Pete Cartwright; 412-215-6254; pete@smalliesontheyough.com; www.facebook.com/smalliesontheyough/.

Wildwood Outfitters: Fly fishing for Trout, Steelhead and other species. Nick DelVecchio; www.wildwoodoutfitterspa.com/; www.facebook.com/wildwoodoutfitters.

Was your name drawn for a possible prize?

Names drawn for prizes. If you see your name in this box, you must contact Darl Black by email at darlblack@windstream.com and supply your shipping address in order to claim your prize. Prize must be claimed before next Fishing Report.

Spool of Gamma Line: Richard at Someday Isle Tackle

Cover Shot—Package of Galida's Grubz: Linda Shuck

Pack of Mike's Custom Tackle Tubes: Dale Clemmer

The Livewell

Brought to you by:
Wiegel Brothers Marine
704 1/2 Elk Street
Franklin, PA 16323
Phone 814-437-2077



Email: Debbie@riverjetpro.com

Kneal Wiegel says “Get a boat and get more bites, catch more fish! The river or lakes—we have boats for all waters.”



Randy with an 11 pound hybrid striped bass from Shenango Lake in Mercer County



52-pound flathead catfish from Pymatuning—Mark Dietrich photo



Rob Selle with smallmouth bass from Pymatuning Lake in Crawford County



Brad Bee –Lake Wilhelm largemouth bass



Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

www.gammafishing.com

Gamma Line may be found locally at the following tackle shops:

- **Consumer Direct Sports (CDS) near Grove City Outlet Mall**
- **Maurer's Trading Post, Franklin, PA**

From Dale Black—President of Gamma Fishing

Gamma Line is pleased to support the 2021 Pymatuning Crappie Madness Brawl organized by the Northeast Ohio Crappie Club and hosted by Duck-N-Drake. This event is open to anyone who registers and pays the entry fee. Like so many anglers, I love to go crappie fishing. Here at Gamma, we've had the opportunity to fish with some of the best crappie anglers across the US. After talking with many everyday crappie anglers and crappie tournament professional anglers a few years back, we developed our Optic Yellow Gamma Panfish Line, a truly high-vis line that helps you detect those light crappie hits. And since this is Gamma Polyflex, it is extremely strong for its respective diameter, yet is very manageable on spools of small reels. Gamma Panfish is the preferred crappie line for many professional crappie anglers and everyday anglers around the county.

Once the Crappie Madness Brawl starts in May, the NW PA Fishing Report will carry the current leader board on this Gamma Tip page, as provided to us by Laurie at Duck-N-Drake. This should be an extremely interesting derby, as we will have the opportunity to have very accurate weights on many Pymatuning crappies. We know a 20-inch four-pound black crappie was caught in a Fish Commission survey net in the Pymatuning Sanctuary about four or five years ago. Now we will see if the main reservoir at Pymatuning will produce a crappie anywhere near that size.

GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE

- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units



GARMIN ADVICE

From Dan Dannenmueller, Professional Crappie Angler

Garmin Perspective is an immense aid to my spider rigging. I use it in Forward View to spot crappies around brushpiles. Here I am targeting large crappies at 10 feet over 20 to 30 feet of water. The screen is cluttered due to high volume of plankton and suspended dirt & sand due to high water and current. The bright spots are fish – crappie and couple gar. The crappie in the photo was from this screen shot; it weighted 1.89 pounds. I was using Tru Turn Hooks with minnows, and jigheads with Bobby Garland Baby Shads on my BnM 14-foot BGJP rods spooled with 10-pound Gamma Panfish as main line and 8-pound Gamma as leader and Thundermist Three-Way Swivels.



1.89 pound white crappie